

# AN Points Bulletin

Dr. Traffic talks with a driver frustrated by dangerous traffic signals  
Dr. Traffic/Page 2C

# Carolinas

## Burning more than books

Pastors at the Ranlo Church of God say burning what is evil is the best way to destroy secular influences

Page 3C  
www.charlotte.com/observer/local

# Gay worshipers find warm welcome at uptown church

By KEN GARFIELD  
Religion Editor

Sunday was just another morning in the new life of First United Methodist in uptown Charlotte. Dozens of gay men, many seated together in groups throughout the Gothic-style sanctuary, were part of the 11 o'clock congregation. Among the eight new church members who stood up to be introduced at the close of worship was a gay man

whose partner stood beside him for support. He, too, was introduced. When worship was over, a 48-year-old gay man who has visited with his partner for five Sundays talked about joining. "This church makes us feel we're no different than any other person," he said. "We're all in the same boat here." First United Methodist may soon need a bigger boat. After years of decline, the well-known church at

North Tryon and Eighth streets is growing — in large part because it is becoming a haven for a growing number of gays. In a church that averages 325 for worship, one gay man said that up to 100 gays turn out for the one service each Sunday, many of them visitors. Of the 90 people who joined the church last year, senior pastor Rusty Inman figures one-third to one-half are gay. Inman, though, said Sunday that his

goal isn't to build a church open just to gays. It's to build a church open to everyone. "The only thing we've been intentional about is welcoming everybody," Inman said after Sunday's 1½-hour service. "What we're doing is creating a climate where people of every stripe and color can feel welcome and part of the family." The transformation of First United Methodist comes at a time when the

debate over homosexuality continues to divide denominations and communities. Just last week, a United Methodist pastor in Nebraska was tried for disobedience after presiding over a same-sex union of two women — a violation of denomination rules. Though the Rev. Jimmy Creech, formerly of Raleigh, was acquitted Friday, the 8.5-mile



Please see METHODIST / page 5C

# How to be Chinese

## Asian American kids get back to roots, language

By PHUONG LY  
Staff Writer

The kids wear "Little Mermaid" shoes and Guess? jeans and carry "Lion King" book bags.

Good signs that they're too American, their parents say. So on Sundays, the children come to class to learn how to be Chinese.

At the Charlotte Chinese Academy, 53 children struggle to forget their English for a couple of hours each week. Here, little Kevin Diao answers to the name "Kai-wen." Helen Hu is "Hai-pin."

"If my kids don't know any Chinese, it's kind of embarrassing," said Sue Tang, the academy's principal. "We have to give some degree of our culture to our kids."

Whether the kids like it or not, weekends in language class are an Asian American rite of passage. And as Charlotte's Asian population grows, so does enrollment at language schools.

Charlotte Chinese Academy, serving children ages 4 and up, opened last fall at Central Piedmont Community College. It's the newest of three private Chinese schools in the city teaching a total of more than 100 children. Other schools offer Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese classes.

Cai Wei enrolled his 8-year-old daughter, Angela, in the academy after a trip to the United Nations. Their tour guide was a Chinese-speaking French woman. "No fair, she can speak Chinese," Angela said. Others were a bit more reluctant.

As a preschooler, Becky Wu's daughter spoke great Chinese. Then Brittany went to kindergarten and started speaking English all the time. "I don't know Chinese anymore," she told her mother.

"I said, 'No, we can't go this way,'" Wu said. Even with practice, the parents know their children's Chinese will probably never be as good as their own. Some of the children sound like non-Chinese fumbling with the language. They mix up tones, and put words in the wrong order.

The youngest kids haven't learned the 26 letters of the English alphabet. Now, they're trying to write some of the 4,000 Chinese characters.

And the parents hear plenty of complaints: "Why do we need Chinese?"

"Everyone else speaks English."

"I was born here, not in China."

Eleven-year-old Euphemia Mu would rather spend her Sunday afternoons jumping on her trampoline.

She makes a face. Here, she says, "We have extra homework and tests."

So would she ever make her kids go through such an experience?

Well, yes, she says. She grudgingly echoes what her parents have said: "They'll be bilingual. They'll be able to go back to China and speak their language."



Annie Yin, 5, makes a face as she gets help with her Chinese lesson from teacher Hao Yinghui at the Charlotte Chinese Academy at Central Piedmont Community College Sunday. The academy is the newest of three private Chinese schools in the city teaching a total of more than 100 children.

Shu Xiao leads a group of parents and grandparents practicing tai chi outside the Charlotte Chinese Academy at CPCC Sunday while the children attend classes.

# McIntosh defends his role

## Blacks want school official reinstated

By JIM WRINN  
Staff Writer

STATESVILLE — In a speech that resounded with religious references, Michael McIntosh on Sunday defended his efforts at Statesville High School as those of a man looking after students as if they were his own children.

McIntosh spoke publicly for the first time since he was suspended last month as assistant principal and athletic director at the school.

He repeatedly referred to his faith in God, his love for children and his desire to return to Statesville High School. The more than 200 people who sang hymns and prayed for McIntosh at First Baptist Church on Garfield Street responded with donations and gave him three standing ovations.

He did not address allegations against him, saying he could not because of pending litigation. Officials with the Iredell-Statesville Schools have declined to discuss McIntosh's suspension, citing state personnel privacy laws. Speakers at a rally last month said McIntosh was suspended after a disagreement with a reporter at the Statesville Record & Landmark newspaper.

McIntosh, who grasped the pulpit and wiped sweat



Please see McINTOSH / page 3C

# Northern I-77 to be repaved

## Night travelers may see delays

By DIANNE WHITCARE  
Staff Writer

Crews will resurface Interstate 77 in north Mecklenburg County, from Exit 28 to the Iredell County line, starting March 30.

Work will be done at night so most traffic on the congested freeway won't be affected. All lanes will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., said Aldie Whitmore, state highway construction engineer for the Charlotte area. The freeway is only two lanes in each direction. It carries more than 70,000 vehicles a day, so the work must be done after 8 p.m., Whitmore said. Night travelers could be delayed because one lane will be closed as crews work.

Blythe Construction of Charlotte won the \$2.1 million contract to repair the 2.5-mile section of I-77.

The work will take six months to complete and includes installing guardrails in the grass median to prevent head-on collisions. The old guardrails on the

Please see FREEWAY / page 16C

# Freemen trial of 3 Charlotte men begins today

Associated Press

Three Charlotte men are among six Montana Freemen heading into federal court today in Billings, Mont., for the first trial resulting from the anti-government group's 1996 armed standoff with the FBI. Steve Hance, 47, and his two sons, James Hance, 24, and John Hance, 21, are accused of aiding and abetting Freemen fugitives during the standoff. They also are charged with being fugitives in possession of firearms — assault rifles and pistols — when they came to the Freemen stronghold. The Hances fled to the Freemen ranch in 1996, before trial in Gaston County from charges growing out of a high-speed chase in 1995. The trial will last several weeks.



Steve Hance

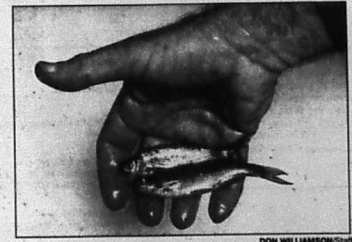
James Hance

All have refused court-appointed lawyers and will defend themselves. They deny the American courts have any jurisdiction over them. They dump documents on the courtroom floor and argue with judges. One, Steve Hance, has threatened a federal magistrate in court. U.S. District Judge John Cough-

as standby counsel for each Freeman, so the trial can continue if he banishes any defendant to a holding cell to watch on a TV monitor. The standby counsel would step in to protect the interests of the absent defendant. About two dozen Freemen have been jailed since June 13, 1996, when they surrendered after an 81-day standoff with FBI agents at their ranch in the remote outback of eastern Montana's "Big Open." Charges against various Freemen include wire and bank fraud and threatening the life of a federal judge and other public officials. The FBI says some 900 people from around the country visited the rural stronghold for Freemen lessons in issuing the worthless

a mishmash of odds and ends from the Bible, the Constitution, the Magna Carta and the Uniform Commercial Code. These six defendants are not the major figures of the standoff — those trials begin in late May — but they include Edwin Clark, who emerged as a leader late in the standoff and helped bring it to a bloodless conclusion. Along with the Hances, the other defendants are Elwin Ward of Salt Lake City and Jon Barry Nelson, whose home is simply given as Kansas. All six are charged with being accessories by aiding federal fugitives, other Freemen in the stronghold, to avoid arrest. Two others charged as acces-

# Live bait gets a splash of color



Harold Collins and Kim Senn, both of Spartanburg, have invented a coloring kit to dye minnows pink, orange or gold to make them attractive to bass and other game fish.